

Locust Grove
State Route 641
Stanardsville vicinity
Greene County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1073

HABS
VA,
40-STANAV.
1-

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LOCUST GROVE

HABS No. VA-1073

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VA

40-STANAV.V.

1-

1. Location: State Route 641
Stanardsville vicinity
Greene County, Virginia
2. Present Owner: Swift Run and Snow Farm Properties - Mr. & Mrs. Pierre Tilmans, 12230 California Avenue N. W., Washington, D. C.
3. Present Use: At the present time Locust Grove is unoccupied and used for no specific purpose.
4. Statement of Significance: Locust Grove is a good example of late 18th century, vernacular architecture. The double front and rear entries suggest a possible German influence which is somewhat unusual east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Two back-to-back stairways, on the first floor, lead to two completely separate living spaces on the second floor.

Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: The original part of Locust Grove was built circa 1798 (according to a surviving member of the builder's family). The northeast addition was built circa 1885.

2. Architect: None

3. Original and Subsequent Owners: Locust Grove was originally built and owned by Issac Davis. The deed was transferred from 1779 as follows (recorded in the Orange County Clerk's Office, Orange, Virginia).

1779 Deed, August 4, 1779, recorded in Deed Book 17, page 214. "Robert sanford and Ann his wife for and in consideration of the Sum of five thousand pounds... have given, granted bargined sold enoffed and confirmed... unto the said John Brooke... one Certain Tract or parcel of land containing by estimation six hundred and ninety acres... situated lying and being in the County of Orange."

1787 Deed, April 23, 1787, recorded in Deed Book 19, page 135. "William Bell and Eliza-beth his wife and Thomas Barbour and Mary his wife in consideration of the sum of Three hundred and sixty pounds... bargain, sell and confirm unto the said Issac Davis one certain tract or parcel of land being part of a large tract formerly belonging to John Brooke..."

1829 Will, March 18, 1829, recorded in Will Book 15, page 141. "Witer I (Issac Davis) give to my son William I. Davis the tract of land whereon I now live containing about six hundred acres be the same more or less to him and his heirs forever..."

In 1838, Greene County, Virginia was formed from Orange County, Virginia. Locust Grove is located in the portion now called Greene County. All of the following references (after 1838), therefore, are recorded in the Greene County Clerk's Office in Standardsville, Virginia.

1843 Deed, October 12, 1843, recorded in Deed Book 2, page 272. "Elijah K. Davis doth hereby acknowledge, hath granted, bargained and sold ... unto the said E. K. Durette (nephew of Elijah K. Davis) his heirs and assigns a certain tract of land lying and being in the County of Greene..."

1887 Deed, June 7, 1887, recorded in Deed Book 6, page 782. "Elijah K. Durette doth hereby bargain, sell, grant and convey unto the said Elijah D. Durette all the right, title, interest and estate of him the said Elijah K. Durette in the lands now held by him for the term of his life, consisting of his life estate in the tract of land where he now resides..."

1936 Will, October 14, 1936, recorded in Will Book 3, page 241. "I (Elijah D. Durette) give, devise and bequeath all my estate, real and personal to my beloved wife Addie B. Durette, to have and to hold during her life. At the death of my beloved wife, Addie B. Durette, I give, devise and bequeath my entire estate, real and personal, to my two sons, Frank Starke Durette and Wyatt Beazley Durette..."

1949 Will, February 23, 1949, recorded in Will Book 4, page 121. "I (Frank S. Durette) leave all the real estate I own to my sister, Dolly Durette Jarman, as long as she lives, and at her death to go to my nephew, Elijah Durette Jarman."

1950 Deed, October 19, 1950, recorded in Deed Book 30, page 140. "Wyatt B. Durette and Beulah Durette, his wife, parties of the first part and Elijah D. Jarman party of the second part; The undivided one half interest or share of the said Wyatt B. Durette and the certain tract or parcel of land in Greene County..."

1969 Deed, August 19, 1969, recorded in Deed Book 45, page 34. "Elijah D. Jarman/single and Dolly D. Jarman, a widow, parties of the first part and W. Copely McLean party of the second part. The property herein conveyed is acreage of which a one half undivided interest was acquired by Elijah Durette Jarman by deed from Wyatt B. Durette and wife dated Oct. 19, 1950 ... and the remaining one half undivided interest was devised under the last will and testament of Frank S. Durette dated Feb. 23, 1949 to Dolly D. Jarman (mother of Elijah D. Jarman) for life and then at her death with remainder in fee simple to Elijah Durette Jarman..."

1980 Deed, November 26, 1980, recorded in Deed Book 120, page 237. "This deed made this 26th day of Nov., 1980 by and between W. Copely McLean and Margaret K. McLean, his wife, parties of the first part, and Swift Run and Snow Farm Properties Limited Partnership (Pierre Tilmans) party of the second part... said parties of the first part hereby Grant, Bargain and Sell and Convey With General Warranty and English Covenants of Title... a tract of 380.5 acres... the same property in all respects conveyed to W. Copely McLean by deed of Elijah D. Jarman, single and Dolly D. Jarman, widow."

4. Builder, contractor: Unknown
5. Original Plans and Construction: No original drawings or plans are known to exist. Photographs, circa 1910 and 1936, indicate the house has changed very little on the exterior. The house was once surrounded by a wooden picket fence and had wooden shingles on the roof.
6. Alterations and Additions:
 - a. Both the southeast and northwest porches were added after the original house construc-

tion. Two basement windows are partially covered on the exterior by the porches indicating that these porches were added sometime after the original house was completed.

b. Structural evidence seems to indicate that the direction of one flight of interior stairs was reversed (date unknown). Floor boards in a closet on the second floor over the present stairs run in a direction contrary to the other flooring of the second story (see measured drawing number 3). This suggests that the space was once open and the flooring was inserted after the stairway was reversed. An exposed beam can be seen directly overhead at the bottom of the present stairs (see measured drawing number 7). The beam was probably once the support at the former head of the stairs for the stair carriage.

c. Circa 1885, a wing was added to the northeast end of the house. On the first floor, the wing includes two finished rooms (kitchen and bedroom) and an interior stairway leading to the basement. On the second floor, the wing includes two unfinished rooms. Tax records in the Greene County Courthouse indicate that the value of the property in 1885 increased in a single year from \$4,900 to \$5,250. Property taxes also increased during that same year from \$32.50 to \$52.00. These increases support the supposed construction date of the

northeast wing.

d. According to Elijah D. Jarman, a former resident of the house, a bathroom was installed in the 1920's in a small room in the southwest corner of the first floor.

Historical Context

Much of the following information was acquired from a personal interview with Mr. Elijah D. Jarman of Standardsville, Virginia. Mr. Jarman is a surviving descendant of Issac Davis, the original owner and supposed builder of Locust Grove. Mr. Jarman's information was based on knowledge passed on from his mother, Dolly Durette Jarman, and his grandfather, Elijah D. Durette.

Locust Grove was built circa 1798, by Issac Davis, a prominent, early settler in Orange County, Virginia. He was a contemporary of Thomas Jefferson and probably was acquainted with him, because both of their signatures appear together on some early legal documents of Albemarle and Orange Counties.

The last will and testament of Issac Davis, found in the Orange County Clerk's Office, indicates that he was a man of considerable wealth. An inventory of his estate, also found in the Orange County Clerk's Office, lists twenty-seven slaves, numerous livestock, as well as household furnishings and personal effects belonging to a man of con-

erable means for early nineteenth century standards.

It is reported that Locust Grove was under construction for two years. The exact identity of its builder is unknown but its rather unusual plan with double, northwest and southeast entries suggests a possible German influence. It is very interesting that the only German settlement east of the Blue Ridge Mountains was located nearby at Madison, Virginia.

Issac Davis willed the property to his son, Elijah K. Davis, in 1829. Elijah K. Davis was a bachelor and passed the property on to his nephew, Elijah K. Durette in 1843. Elijah K., in turn, passed the property on to his son, Elijah D. Durette, in 1887.

It is believed that Elijah D. Durette added the present northeast wing about 1885. He was also responsible for the unusual water storage system on the second floor of the addition. A large, copper lined metal tank, measuring 8'x3'x3', was installed on the second floor. Pipes ran from a nearby spring to the second floor tank. Water was mechanically pumped from the spring through the pipes to the storage tank where it gravity fed the kitchen and bathroom on the first floor. Unfortunately, this ingenious, water system only worked during the warm weather months. The pipes froze during the winter months

when water had to be carried by hand to the house from the spring.

In 1936, Elijah D. Durette willed Locust Grove to his wife, Addie B. Durette, and their two sons, Frank S. and Wyatt B. Durette. After Addie's death, Frank and Wyatt Durette each owned one half interest in the estate. In 1949, Frank S. Durette willed his one half interest to his sister, Dolly Durette Jarman and her son, Elijah D. Jarman. In 1950, Wyatt B. Durette sold the remaining one half interest to his nephew, Elijah D. Jarman. Elijah D. and his mother, Dolly D. Jarman, owned the property jointly until 1969. Locust Grove had remained in the same family from 1787 until 1969, a total of one hundred eighty two years. In 1969, Elijah D. and his mother sold the property, which included 280 acres of land, to Dr. W. Copely McLean of Charlottesville, Virginia. Dr. McLean joined Locust Grove with the nearby Snow Farm making the total acreage almost equal to the original 600 acres. In 1980, Dr. and Mrs. McLean sold the property to Swift Run and Snow Farm Properties, which is handled by Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Tilmans of Washington, D. C.

Sources of Information

Interviews:

1. Margaret K. McLean
2. Elijah D. Jarman
3. Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Tilmans

Deed and Will Books:

1. Deed Books 17 & 19 - Orange County Clerk's Office,
Orange, Virginia
2. Deed Books 2, 6, 30, 45 & 120 - Greene County
Clerk's Office, Stanardsville, Virginia
3. Will Books 3 & 4 - Greene County Clerk's Office,
Stanardsville, Virginia
4. Will Book 159 - Orange County Clerk's Office,
Orange, Virginia

Architectural Information

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: Locust Grove is a two and one half story vernacular, frame structure built circa 1798.
2. Condition of the Fabric: The general condition of the house is fair.

B. Description of the Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: The overall width of the original house is 28'-2" and the overall length is 38'-4".
2. Foundations: The foundation walls are constructed of rough uncoursed fieldstone masonry. The stone work of the foundation walls under the porches is partially covered with stucco.
3. Wall Construction: Exterior walls are 5 1/2" thick covered on the outside with 5" horizontal clapboards painted white.
4. Structural System: The exterior and interior walls are frame. The first floor is supported by three, twelve inch square summer beams and 9"x3" joists spaced 16" on center.
5. Porches: The southeast porch is 8'-4"x 24'-2" with wooden flooring supported by a rough,

uncoursed, fieldstone masonry foundation.

The approach steps are concrete. The columns and balustrade are wooden. The roof is frame covered with 2' wide sheet metal panels. The northwest porch is 8'- 6" x 21' - 8" with wooden flooring supported by a rough uncoursed fieldstone masonry foundation. The approach steps are concrete. The wooden columns are chamfered and are believed to be original. The roof is frame covered with 2' wide sheet metal panels.

6. Chimneys: The southwest brick chimney is Flemish bond on the face but English bond on the narrow ends. The base of the chimney is partially covered with stucco. The two northeast brick chimneys are unusual, because they are a combination of American bond and Common bond. The bases and first floor levels of both chimneys are American bond with three rows of stretchers between the header rows. From the second floor level to the top, however, these two chimneys are Common bond. Penciling has been applied (date unknown) to the mortar joints on the second floor level.

7. Openings: a. Doorways and Doors: The raised panel, wooden doors (six panels per door) throughout the house are believed to be original.

b. Windows and Shutters: The first floor windows have nine over nine, 8 1/2" x 10" panes with 1" muntins. The second floor windows have nine over six, 8 1/2" x 10" panes with 1" muntins. Both first and second floor windows are joined with wooden pegs and are believed to be original. All windows, except the attic windows, either presently have or have had, in the past, wooden, louvered shutters painted dark green. There are three original basement windows which had vertical 1" square, wooden bars set 2" apart in the frames. One of the basement windows still has the wooden bars intact, but the bars have been removed from the other two original frames. The four attic windows have all been replaced (date unknown).

c. Cellar and Crawl Space: There is a small, unfinished cellar under the northeast end of the original house. The original access to the cellar was located on the exterior of the northwest side of the house. That opening, however, was closed (date unknown) and replaced with a window. The present stairway to the cellar is located on the interior of the northeast wing addition built circa 1885. There is a two foot high crawl space under the north-

west end of the original house.

8. Roof: the present gable roof is covered with 2' wide sheet metal panels. Photographs of about 1910, however, show that the house had a wooden shingle roof. Under the present metal roof 1" x 6", wooden, sheathing boards run horizontally across the rafters. The edges of each board are beveled so that they overlap when tightly butted against each other. It is believed that these beveled, sheathing boards are original, because handmade, iron nails can be seen protruding through the boards into the attic below. The handmade nails probably, originally, held the wooden shingles in place before the metal roofing was applied. The rafters and cross braces are dovetailed and fastened together with large hand wrought nails.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans: a. First Floor: The first floor of the original house has two entry doors from each porch making a total of four exterior doorways. The floor plan is centrally divided by two back-to-back stairways which lead to the second floor. One open fireplace is located in the parlor on the southwest end of the house. Two closed fireplaces are located on the northeast end; one in the

dining room and one in the family sitting room. A small room, now used as a bathroom, in the southwest corner of the first floor is thought to have once been an entry hall off one of the northwest porch entries. A dividing partition was installed in this small area in the 1930's to provide more privacy for the bathroom. Prior to the bathroom installation, however, this was all one space, without the partition.

b. Second Floor: The second floor plan is very unusual, because it is divided into two entirely separate living spaces with a separate stairway leading to each space. There is no visible evidence that there was ever a passage between the two second floor spaces. One open fireplace is located on each end of the second floor. The northeast end of the plan has a stairway leading to the attic.

2. Flooring: The flooring throughout the house is made of random width (3" to 6") heart pine boards (pit sawn) which run longitudinally.
3. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The interior walls and ceilings are covered with hand-riven lath and plaster. On the first floor there is a 3' raised panel wainscotting with chair rail in all the rooms. On the second floor, there is a chair rail but no wainscotting in every

room. In the dining room, there is what remains of a very unusual, wooden punkah on the ceiling. Unfortunately, the wooden fan blade, which swung back and forth when pulled by a rope and pulley system, has been lost.

4. Hardware: Both interior and exterior hardware consists of a mixture of cast iron from various periods.
5. Lighting and Plumbing: The house has been completely wired for electricity but no central heating has ever been installed. Two of the fireplaces were closed and wood-burning stoves were installed during the nineteenth century.

D. Site

1. Locust Grove is located one eighth mile from State Route 641. An old road, no longer open for public use, runs past the northwest facade of the house. The remains of this old road can be traced through the nearby fields and woods. It once joined the nearby community of Celt (see USGS map in Appendix). The old road was in use up until the early part of the twentieth century. The existence of the old road has led to speculation concerning the possibility that Locust Grove may have originally fronted on the Northwest, rather than on the Southeast. The small room presently used as a bathroom on the first floor might have been used, originally, as an entry hall, if the house was indeed once

fronted on the Northwest. Another interesting indicator of northwest orientation is the existence of the beautiful, exterior Flemish bond chimney on the southwest end of the house. This chimney could have been seen and admired from the old road where it may have been considered a part of the front of the house. Today, this chimney is unseen from the present southeast approach to the house. A small, family cemetery where Issac Davis, Elijah K. Davis and other original family members are buried is located on the southwestern edge of the yard between the house and old road.

2. Dependencies: There are five outbuildings located on the site. A frame barn built sometime after 1910, is located approximately 500 feet northeast of the house. A frame corncrib with dovetailed joints and hand wrought nails is located approximately 50 feet south of the corncrib. Approximately 20 feet from the northeast end of the house is a 12 foot square, frame smokehouse. Heavy timber framing, beaded 5 inch clapboards and hand wrought nails and door hinges indicate that the smokehouse is probably about the same age as the original house. A combination stable and storage building stands directly across the old road from the northwest facade of the

house. An early (date unknown) building of unknown purpose located south of the house was demolished in the 1960's.

Project Information

This documentation was produced at the School of Architecture of the University of Virginia under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Professor of Architecture, during 1982. The project was undertaken by Thomas Dolan, Graduate Student in Architectural History, and the material was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not produced under HABS supervision, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.

Of great help to Mr. Dolan in the production of this material were Margaret K. McLean, Elijah D. Jarman, and Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Tilmans.